

### **REMARKS**

The present remarks are in response to the Office Action dated January 12, 2006, in which the Examiner rejected claims 1-20. The Applicant has amended claims 1, 9, and 13. The Applicant respectfully responds to the Examiner's Detailed Action and requests the Examiner place all claims detailed in the application in a state of allowance.

#### **Claim Rejections – 35 USC 103**

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-20 as being unpatentable over Burden, U.S. Patent 3,243,568 (hereinafter referred to as "Burden") in view of Wada et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,208,564 (hereinafter referred to as "Wada"), and further in view of Saito et. al, Japanese Patent 3-297587 (hereinafter referred to as "Saito"). Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's arguments.

In reviewing the Office Actions, Applicant notes that none of the cited prior art teaches a thin elongated strip that is coupled to another strip wherein the has a longitudinal channel. Additionally, none of the prior art cited by the Examiner teaches a guide tube that is oscillates in an electrosag process.

However, to expedite the prosecution of this patent application the Applicant has amended the independent claims 1, 9, and 13 to include language about a weld gap for guide tube oscillation, the location of the longitudinal channel being distant from the elongated edges, a plurality of button insulators that are configured to melt in a weld puddle and have a flat projecting face configured to provide adequate clearance for oscillation.

Burden does not teach a guide tube oscillating within a weld gap. Burden also does not teach openings for the welding wire that are distant from the edges of the guide tube. (See Burden FIG. 4 through FIG. 10). Additionally, Burden fails to teach a plurality of button insulator modules.

Wada also does not teach a guide tube configured to oscillate within a weld gap. Additionally, Wada fails to teach a longitudinal channel that is distant from the elongated edges. (See Wada FIG. 2). In FIG. 3, Wada teaches two plates 113 and 114 that are fan shaped as described in col. 3: line 21-26. Note, Applicant claims two elongated strips and not fan shaped plates as described in Wada. Wada also does not teach a plurality of button insulators that are coupled to the “back face” of the first and second elongated strip. In fact, Wada teaches insulating projections that are mounted on the nozzle plate through a hole that is bored into the plate. See Wada col. 3: lines 51-66, and FIG. 6 – FIG. 8. Furthermore, the Wada insulators fail to melt in the weld puddle as acknowledged by the Examiner. Further still, Wada fails to teach that the insulator buttons have a flat projecting face configured to provide adequate clearance for oscillation of the guide tube.

The Saito reference Saito stands for the proposition of having an “insulating spacer” that melts in a molten flux puddle, in which the insulating spacer is a “flux ring.” The Saito flux ring surrounds the guide tube. See Saito FIG. 1 – 15. Applicant claims a plurality of button insulator modules located on the back face of each strip and nowhere does Saito illustrate a plurality of discrete insulator buttons on a back face of each strip. Also, Saito does not teach that these insulator modules have a flat face and provide adequate clearance for oscillation of the guide tube.

As stated in Section 2143 of the MPEP:

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the reference themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art references (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations.

The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art, not in the applicant's disclosure. Section 2143, MPEP Rev. 2.0, May 2004, pg. 2100-129.

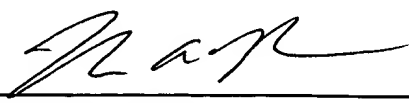
The Applicant respectfully submits that the amended independent claims 1, 9, and 13 each include limitations that singly overcome the prior art. In combination there is no suggestion or motivation in the prior art to provide a guide tube as claimed by the Applicant.

**D. Conclusion**

For all the forgoing reasons, withdrawal of the finality of the rejection of the present Office Action and allowance of claims 1 to 20 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully Submitted;

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